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Our Universities: Institutional Pride

Pride in a community effort is well-placed. Misplaced pride focuses on self. Well placed pride focuses outwardly towards something larger than self. This is ultimately what produces excellence in a university.

When you look at a city, it's like reading the hopes, aspirations and pride of everyone who built it.

Hugh Newell Jacobsen, American Architect

Little is more important to the quality of the student experience at the university than institutional pride.

We tend to trivialize pride in an institution through things like success in intercollegiate athletics although it is important and when well executed becomes a significant point of pride. Boston College, Bucknell and Bowdoin all boast academic success for student athletes...and they are scandal-less. Pride in proper priorities.

The physical appearance of the campus stimulates pride, but if it's only about the quality of architecture or sophistication in landscaping, institutional pride is seasonal and fleeting. Elon University in North Carolina is one of the most beautiful campuses in the world, in part because of the educational excellence it inspires. Likewise, Kenyon and Sewanee are equally beautiful and academically able. Pride in place.

People responsible for a campus functioning in an efficacious manner are a source of pride, and generate loyalty to purpose, that a well managed enterprise brings to institutional mission – from janitors to executives. Pride swells at places like George Mason University in Virginia; annually recognized by the Chronicle of Higher Education as a great university to work for. Abilene Christian University and Birmingham-Southern College also attract praise from faculty and staff alike. Pride is infectious.

Ideas that flow from the campus into the larger community create pride. New freshmen and distinguished faculty recognize intellectual accomplishment. It engenders commitment and spawns pride. Johns Hopkins regularly scores nearly \$1.5 billion in peer reviewed federal research funds. Colorado State University's Wheat Breeding and Genetics program generates private corporate support to address wheat production in the relentless climate of Colorado. Pride in value of results.

People know that quality, substance, and durability attract resources as sure as a magnet attracts iron filings. External commitments to an organization bring pride for all associated with it. Amherst, Grinnell, and Williams all post endowments per student of nearly \$1 million. Pride opens purses.

Partnerships and relationships in the community demonstrate value in the University's contribution to the local economy. Pride is extended from the local community towards the University. Eastern Connecticut State University, Stanford University and St. Mary's

Universities are all recognized for giving back to the community. While surprising to some but old news to the people in the communities that are home to these institutions. Pride in service rendered.

When commitments are made to individuals who may have been barred from participation in universities by birth, social status, or life experience, organizational pride has a heart. Caring builds pride. St. Johns, Andrews University, and the University of Houston all provide a range of opportunity to a wide array of citizenry. Pride in possibilities.

While these observations apply to universities in different settings, the single most powerful pride producer is proficiency in pedagogy provided by purposeful professors engaged with good students committed to learning. Educational accomplishment is the nucleus of pride in any university and no factor its' equal in making a university work.

With budget cuts, increasing tuition, layoffs, cutbacks, restrictions on access to services, deferred maintenance, and a host of other challenges faced by universities in every state in the nation, the fix for universities appears to be resource flows. As critical as they are and as threatening as these hurdles may be, resource flows will not create excellence in the absence of pride. Common is the bloated organization that becomes sloppy in purpose.

Pride is the gold standard of currency in the institutional account. Every action on a university campus makes a deposit to the storehouse of pride, withdraws from the account, or borrows against it.

And lest you think that some actions at universities are tangential to the course of the river of pride - don't. Improprieties in intercollegiate athletics, corruption in the leadership, falling standards -- tolerance for anything less than an unswerving effort in classrooms and laboratories that make up the heart of the university, are excuse makers, not excellence creators. Pride perishes from the inside out. Pride frittered is institutional value undermined and compromised.

University stock rises and falls on the flow and modulation of pride.